Music Wars: Blood and Song at the End of Yugoslavia

TOMISLAV LONGINOVIĆ

Our folk songs are full of character, full of deeply rooted psyche, full of extreme passions and one could say full of blood and race as well.

(Vladimir Dvorniković, Characterology of the Yugoslavs, 1939)

ended the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1941, while the end of the Cold War indirectly led to the implosion of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991. This essay is an attempt to tell the bloody story of these two ends, by examining the ethnomusicological theories of Vladimir Dvorniković before the end of the first Yugoslavia and by analyzing the role that popular music, as the "voice of blood," played in the cultural deconstruction of the second Yugoslavia. These two ends are marked by the loss of identity of those who forged their Yugoslav identity by accepting a shared set of values and practices that would define their community as a state of "South Slavs," although different civilizational and implicitly racial narratives informed the particular identities of various Slavic and non-Slavic populations that inhabited the last two Yugoslavias.

Combining the racial notion of "Slav-dom" with the shared historical destiny of "slave-dom," Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Slovenes, Macedonians, and Montenegrins imagined their political and cultural unity along very different lines. This difference was structured by the kind of imperial and colonial power which ruled over different Balkan peoples before they began to imagine a new sense of national identity during nineteenth-century struggles for independence, political self-determination, and collective territorialization of identity. The project

of imagined unity not only rested on the political and social solidarity of Southern Slavs, but counted on a very strong intellectual mobilization to achieve the cultural cooperation that would result in the formation of a community of cultures within the framework of the multiethnic Slavic state.

Music was one of the key elements of the Yugoslav project, especially in its popular forms and manifestations. Since the Balkan Peninsula was for the most part inhabited by rural populations, the peasant song was regarded as the ultimate expression of the "Yugoslav character." This notion, modeled on a mixture of the romantic conception of "folk" and a specific Balkan model of "modernization," prompted the most significant Yugoslav "ethnopsychologist" to posit the peasant song as the ultimate voice of common South Slavic "blood and race." Dvorniković's Characterology of the Yugoslavs was published on the eve of World War II, in the same year the German Nazis and Russian Stalinists divided Poland and Croatia gained autonomy from the Yugoslav kingdom as a result of German pressure. Because external and internal projects to counter Yugoslav unity were so strong in 1939, Dvorniković's dream of a common South Slavic character has a tragic echo. The scientific idea of race obsessed this thinker whose Croat roots in Dalmatia and later Bosnia were followed by the embrace of Bosniak and South Serbian/Macedonian culture.

"Our folk song," which this enthusiastic Yugoslav imagined as a collective voice of the South Slavic "blood and race," has been fragmented twice since he wrote his monumental *Characterology* in 1939. The latest fragmentation of Yugoslavia through the formation of new state entities came about as a result of the "civilizational" differentiation of the Yugoslav idea. This differentiation was followed by the sounds of new songs, whose specific "national" flavor bears the marks of new incarnations of a "cultural" racism which has been given free reign during the latest intra-Yugoslav confrontations. It is especially tragic that Dvorniković imagined Bosnian songs as the "bottom of the soul" of all those Yugoslav peoples who suffered various forms of foreign occupation and domination.

He quotes one of the singers he interviewed in Montenegro who explains singing as a need to give expression to suffering, and not as an esthetic activity: "I don't sing because I know how, I sing to get rid of my soul's burden" (Dvorniković 1939: 429). This musical "burden" of the Yugoslav soul was imagined as the ultimate voicing of unity among different ethnicities. While trying to work out the classification of various cultural traditions, Dvorniković distinctly invokes folk music as the

supreme embodiment of the Yugoslav "national spirit": "The psychology of *melos* and music leads us in the most direct, experiential manner into the deepest emotional layers, into the rhythmics and dynamics of our national psyche" (33).

While tacitly reasserting Schelling's theory of music as the most intuitive and therefore supreme of all arts, Dvorniković also "modernizes" Herder's Romantic conception of *Volksgeist* by invoking the notion of a common "national psyche." It is symptomatic that the identities of non-Slavic peoples, such as Albanians, Roma (Gypsies), Jews, and others do not figure in his more than a thousand-page-long, monumental study *Karakterologija Jugoslovena* (Characterology of the Yugoslavs) except a negative against which the Slavic folk genius can be imagined. The tacit exclusion of non-Slavs turns into outright racism when Dvornikovic turns away in disgust from the singing of the Yugoslav Roma:

The inner being and lyricism of the Slavic song is completely alien to Gypsies. Tenderness, nostalgia, pride, manliness, heroism, subtlety, reticence, sacrifice for the loved one; all those elements of our real folk song do not come through in the Gypsy interpretation. . . . Let it be called Gypsy singing, but not the "Yugoslav folk song." . . . Our folk song should be protected from this kind of sacrilege. (399)

The singing of Roma is seen as detrimental to the development of national character, which is based on Dvorniković's theory of "integral Yugoslavism," which was promoted by the Serbian royal dynasty before World War II. War songs and turbo folk, which came into being during and after the latest Wars of Yugoslav Succession (1991–95), are cultural phenomena that work against the culturally based common identity and community promoted by both the royalist and the communist Yugosland states. The active suppression of any discussions of racially motivated genocides of World War II during the communist period (1945-91) greatly damaged Tito's project of Yugoslavism, which could be characterized as proto-multicultural. While Roma, Albanians, Jews, and other minorities received better treatment in Yugoslavia than in any of the neighboring states in Tito's Yugoslavia, Slavic populations that share a common language (Bosnians, Croats, Montenegrins, Serbs) ender up nurturing mutual resentments due to unresolved issues of collective crimes and punishments. The literal and figurative displacement and erasure of "cultural others" during the War of Succession has been accompanied by the sounds of "racialized" war songs, which sing about the domination and superiority of particular protagonists in the latest conflict.

While constructing the Yugoslav prototype around the "Dinaric race," the one shared by the three major religious groups which inhabit the Dinaric Mountains along the Adriatic Sea, Dvorniković obviously feels uneasy about generalizing, since cultural traditions adopted through foreign conversions and colonizations pose the greatest problem for the idea of a common "Yugoslav race." As a young man he hears the essence of the newly imagined race in the sound of Bosnian folk ballads (sevdalinke). Songs of love, pain, and longing for one's youth define the national soul, whose sounds at first frighten Dvorniković: "I have to admit that these songs were quite horrifying to me during my adolescent vears... Nasal, drawn out, with countless melismatic transitions" (376). The sounds which at first cause fear in Dvorniković's Yugoslav soul are sung in a double voice of the "Oriental and Proto-Slavic" heritage. But "Oriental" is constructed as the surface, the external, colonial layer of the song, while the Slavic heritage is seen as rooted in the racial character as the primal pain of existence.

After transition into manhood my relationship with this type of song and folk music in general changed fundamentally: after a long incubation, the infection broke out. *Bacillus bosniensis*, although my ancestors are not Bosnian, entered my blood, and from the bottom of my soul, somewhere from its most atavistic depths, a string emerged which vibrated upon hearing the most primitive song of the porters. (376–77)

Dvorniković experiences growing appreciation of the Yugoslav folk song as an infection with a deadly disease of manhood, in his case achieved after initiation into love, sexuality, and the horrors of World War I. Longing for love combines with the longing for freedom to dominate the Yugoslav masculine imagination and is voiced in Bosnian folk ballads rooted in Ottoman, Sephardic, and Slavic heritages. The contamination of his own Croatian, Western soul with musically sounded Bosnian melancholy is the first initiation into a community whose "blood" is infected by the pain and desire of the post-colonial subject: centuries of racial segregation and gender oppression under the Ottoman millet system nurture a musical tradition which works to alleviate both the singer's and the audience's "burden." Yugoslavs are not only the South Slavs, but slaves from the European South as well: the continual contest between European and Asian empires to conquer and pacify these "bloodthirsty tribes" has forged a desire for Yugoslavia based on a common bond between subjects of different colonial masters.

Dvorniković's Yugoslavism could therefore be imagined primarily as a project based on the concept of race as a common historical destiny,

and not so much on narratives and songs which mainly divide the South Slavs along the boundaries of former imperial domains. And now, Tito's political clones are fashioning new national cultures based on the hatred of their former "brothers" by the voicing of those cultural differences. Songs serve as a powerful tool for the formation of new collective memories, for a return to the sense of isolation from the cultures of those who no longer belong to the same birth community. The resurrection of particularized ethnicities marks a powerful return to the Romantic concepts of the people, outfitted in the 1990s with electronic media and a surplus of weapons accumulated during the Cold War paranoia which pitted Tito's Yugoslavia against both the East and the West. A return to the "old" was the easiest way to politically effect the transition into the "new," especially by populations that had been coded as "inferior races" during the World War II Nazi cleansing of Germany and Eastern Europe. When racial differences are based on a sense of civilizational belonging, the transition from the status of an "inferior" to a "superior" race is realizable with a minimum of political, social, and cultural performance of cultural differences.

That is why Dvorniković feels obliged to confront major proponents of Nordic racial superiority in 1939. Countering theories of Ludwig Woltmann, Dvorniković casts an ironic glance at his racial vision of Europe: "We should not forget that Nietzsche's *blonde Bestie* was a man who introduced organized industry, electricity and radio-waves, but also caused great anxiety by authoring such grandiose cultural advancements under the rubric of 'world war,' 'air war,' 'total war'; it is not unusual that the criterion of superiority turned against him within the soul of other races" (191–92).¹

The turn caused by the technological utopia of Nordic racial superiority in "the soul of other races" takes the form of new fractures effected through the hygienic extermination of those below the racial divide, something that Dvorniković senses is already taking place inside his "Yugoslav soul." Since the name of Slavs already contains etymological echoes of their slave identity, their fantasies of superiority are imagined as a return to the past days of medieval glory before their respective descent into the status of subjects which were enslaved, assimilated, and colonized by imperial religions and cultures which they now consider their own. This fractured identity of slaves with the memory of kings emerges as a norm during the nineteenth-century struggles for independence from foreign domination in the Balkans.

One could reduce Dvorniković's invention of the Yugoslav race to a cultural apology for the centrist tendencies of the Karadjordjević dynasty, but a closer look at his idea of common "blood and racial filiation" among the Balkan Slavs manifests deeper internalization of the Romantic gaze:

However, blood and racial filiation (at least in the beginning), common life through the centuries, common struggle, and historical destiny join individuals and create a common psychological type out of them, starting with daily life routines, from reactions in the most insignificant situations to those supraindividual and transgenerational leanings which bind all those individuals into one collective, into one will, into one common way of thinking and feeling, in short, into one *spirit* of the nation. (17)

South Slavic identity is constructed on the model posited by the interiorization of the Herderian gaze which imagined "the people" as an amalgam of racial and cultural categories. German Romantic imagination provided Balkan Slav literate intelligentsia with a vision of identity rooted in the songs and dances of illiterate peasants whom they identified as the supreme expression of the people's collective belonging. The 1850 Vienna agreement between the Croat Ljudevit Gaj and the Serb Vuk Karadžić defined the project of South Slavic cultural unity based on the choice of a common linguistic dialect that was supposed to be the root of the new Yugoslav identity. While searching for the spontaneous and the original in writing down the songs of the people, Vuk defined the relationship of Serbs with other Balkan Slavs as a project based on the "folkloristic" unity of the peasantry whose motto was: "One people of three faiths." Minute Balkan urban classes, steeped in racial and cultural hybridity, at this time developed a peculiar habit of imagining "the people" they belonged to on the basis of as an imaginary peasant, who spent the entire nineteenth century singing and dying for love and freedom. The Balkan urban mentality emerged as a simultaneous embrace and distancing from the "primitive" non-culture of the peasants, whose life was posited as a national ideal that counters the artifice and degradation of urban life, while such rustic life was to be personally avoided by all means.

Although blood is invoked as a basis for collectivity, the second part of Dvorniković's definition of the national spirit offers "historical destiny" as a source of the true *Volksgeist* that directs common identity. The ethnopsychologist's desperate desire to imagine the Yugoslav identity as a totality of "one will" and "one spirit of the nation" gradually slips into the discourse of racial supremacy based on the primitive power and vitality of the Dinaric type. Dvorniković proceeds to define the Dinaric type as the organic basis of the "Yugoslav race" by trying to set the issue of

superiority aside. Yet the "great anxiety" of the race slated for extermination by Hitler lingers as he explores the depths of the "Yugoslav soul." The turn "within the soul of other races" caused by the preparation of the "total war" effort on the part of the Nordic race causes Dvorniković to cast a superior look from the margin toward the center of Europe. The North is imagined as the seat of "technology," as German ingenuity led astray by the stupidity of racism. This stereotypical Romantic "gaze from the heights" is assimilated and returned from the borderlines of Europe, where Dvorniković imagines the birth of genius from the bosom of the Dinaric mountains. The Balkans' status of "not quite Europe" provides him with a lens on a subject of an unacknowledged postcolonialism: the technology which fuels the modernization of Europe is at the same time the fuel of its aggression. Although he sets out to counter and criticize the very notion of racially based evaluation of cultures, he cannot resist the temptation of challenging the natural right of the "blond beast" to rule the world.

The Romantic gaze had been fully internalized by the thinkers of Yugoslav late modernism, which provided the "inferior races" with their own vision of civilizational superiority. Dvorniković scorns European musical notation systems as a "bloodless scheme of Western musical mathematics," since its signifiers are not able to contain the fullness of "our folk song" (391). The failure of Western transcription to grasp the "primitive" power and melodic subtlety of the Yugoslav folk song is the sign of an emerging complex of superiority rooted in the internalized gaze of the Romantics, which places the Balkan musical heritage at the imagined "primitive origins" of Europe's identity.

By essentializing the folk song as the collective expression of Yugoslavism, this racial thinker develops a counter-discourse of Yugoslav power based on the shared destiny of historical victimization. Dvorniković imagines the plenitude that exudes from the population which creates songs full of melancholy and sorrow. The "extreme passions" are sounded by the collectivity that participates in the performance of the folk song as a ritual "unburdening" of the soul of those Yugoslavs whose identity has been rooted in historical memories of five to ten centuries of foreign oppression.

Dvorniković locates the most intense expression of people's pain in the territories where Turkish colonization lasted the longest in Yugoslavia. Folk song represents the bottom of the soul, an abyss from which emanates the pain of unfulfilled desire and destiny. Dvorniković hears the most acute expression of the Yugoslav soul in the songs that invokes dert and sevdah. These two Ottoman Turkish words, which denote the pain of perpetual frustration and melancholy caused by the loss or distance of the desired object, have been assimilated into the vocabulary of Bosnian, Serbian, and Macedonian populations as the supreme signifiers of collective suffering.

Dvorniković imagines the Balkan combination of café, restaurant, and bar, the kafana, as an "orientalized" site where men gather to vent their individual and communal frustrations by drinking plum brandy, occasionally smashing glasses on the floor to relieve their "burden" while listening to and sometimes participating in the performance of the folk song. The fact that women (invariably perceived as fallen) and "Gypsies" continue to be the main performers of Balkan folk songs manifests the enmeshed cultural coding of race and gender. The descendants of European and Asian slaves revel in their injured masculinity, while listening to the songs which evoke the sweet pain of longing. To use a word coming from the same Arabic root as the Portuguese saudade, the folk song evokes sevdah, the black bile of melancholy that lingers in the singing of Bosnians: "Sevdah languishes in the soul; a muffled pain which can erupt with mad and limitless intensity" (385). The mad and limitless intensity with which communist Yugoslavia imploded in 1991 (Croatia) and 1992 (Bosnia and Herzegovina) gave voice to the suppressed pain of Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks as they fought to affirm their particular "racial-cultural" identities during the wars for independence and ethnic territorialization.

"The Yugoslav soul" imagined by Dvorniković as a sounding of people's historical and racial pain was severely fractured shortly after the 1939 publication of Dvorniković's characterology: under combined German Nazi and Italian Fascist occupation, Yugoslavs were divided along old civilizational lines into Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, etc. The bond of "common blood" was broken as a result of foreign occupation, but first Yugoslavia did not survive because the Serbs, who imagined themselves as the "integral" rulers of Yugoslavia, had a very different conception of "Yugoslavism" than Croats and Slovenes, who saw it as a transitional structure on the road to full national independence.

Following the sequence of events that caused the implosion of the second Yugoslavia in 1991, one could posit a hierarchy of musical differences that was constructed as a tool of "racial/cultural" separation from the common state. The process of "civilizational" differentiation began with the Slovenes, whose yodeling call from the snowy Alps immediately identified them with their Austro-Germanic colonial past. Slovene embrace of *Mitteleuropa* and "civil" society served as a strategic tool for the ostensible rejection of "communism," reinforced by the separation

from the concepts of "Slavdom" and "Balkans." The Croats were the first to hear the yodeling call from the heights of the North and the light of the West. Their persistent struggle to stake out their belonging to Europe and the white race had been perpetually frustrated by the presence of Serbs in Croatia, whom they constructed as a doubly "orientalized" Other: first as "cunning Byzantines" who obstinately cling to their Cyrillic alphabet and Orthodox Christian religion, and second as former Ottoman slaves whose race and culture have been contaminated by the presence of Asia-in-Europe. Dr. Peter Tancig, a Slovene Minister of Science at the outset of the latest war, sent a circular message to fellow Slovenes on the Internet, clearly articulating the main features of the dominant form of Western racism which today guides the policies of both the European Union and the United States:

The basic reason for all the past/present mess is the incompatibility of two main frames of reference/civilization, unnaturally and forcibly joined in Yugoslavia. On one side you have a typical violent and crooked oriental-bizantine [sic] heritage, best exemplified by Serbia and Montenegro. . . On the other side (Slovenia, Croatia) there is a more humble and dilligent [sic] western-catholic tradition. . . . Trying to keep Yugoslavia afloat . . . is also very bad geostrategic thinking, as independent (and westernized) Slovenia (and Croatia) could and would act as a "cordon sanitaire" against the eastern tide of chaos. (Hayden and Bakić-Hayden 1992: 12)

It is important to emphasize the often misunderstood point about the conceptions of collective identity of various peoples in former Yugoslavia. Since most of the ethnic definitions in the United States are based on race as an extension of "color," I am often asked to point out the differences between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims based on those "visible" criteria. Since all the Balkan peoples are more or less "white" according to American racial criteria, the conceptions of race are largely based on the "invisible" notions of cultural superiority derived from a sense of belonging initiated as a result of the colonization of the Balkan peninsula by different imperial powers. These identifications are largely based on territorializations of one's religious confession: Croats see themselves as part of the culture based on Roman Catholicism, Serbs as part of Eastern Orthodox culture stemming from Byzantium, while Bosniak identity is defined by their conversion to Islam during five centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans.

The latest Yugoslav war was indeed fueled by the new type of racism which seems to permeate Europe at the moment, based on what Taguieff has called *differentialist racism* and Balibar has defined as a current belief

that "you have to respect the 'tolerance thresholds,' maintain 'cultural distances' or, in other words, in accordance with the postulate that individuals are the exclusive heirs and bearers of a single culture, segregate collectives (the best barrier in this regard still being national frontiers)" (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 22-23) This new form of "racism without race" naturalizes cultural differences to such an extent that members of a given community perceive their differences from cultures of their neighbors as insurmountable and therefore better kept at a distance. Indeed, the case of former Yugoslavia is the most extreme "acting out" of the symptoms of this very European disease. The Yugoslav tragedy was augmented by the opened eyes and "closed noses" of West Europeans, whose own version of cultural and moral superiority instituted distance between themselves and Yugoslavs, whose country was represented as a site of savage butchery by "lesser Europeans." Indeed, all of "Eastern" Europe has been excised from "Europe proper" on the basis of this new brand of racism.

The case of the most widely spoken language of former Yugoslavia is a good indicator of how differentialist racism operates on the concrete level. While Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs speak basically the same language, with some regional variations, use of a mutually intelligible communication code is obviously not a guarantee of political unity, as the latest Yugoslav implosion demonstrates with sobering clarity. The speed with which the language once called "Serbo-Croatian" has been transformed into "Bosnian," "Croatian," and "Serbian" shows how wars can drive nations to embrace cultural projects which reject mutually intelligible communication in favor of mutual misunderstanding, fear, hatred, and aggression.

Croats and Bosniaks had especially wished to distance themselves linguistically from the Serbs, whose territorial presence in Croatia and Bosnia stood in the way of "pure Croatia" and "multicultural Bosnia." Regional variants are stressed to establish and naturalize cultural difference, with Croats resurrecting the linguistic heritage from the Ustashe period and Bosniaks stressing the Arabic and Ottoman vocabulary and inflection. Books written in Cyrillic script are destroyed by Croatian libraries, since they mark the presence of the impure Serb culture within pure, Western, Roman Catholic Croatia. At the same type, Cyrillic is adopted as the official alphabet of Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnian Serb territories and Latin script purged from school programs. Serbian cultural belonging to the sphere of Orthodoxy makes them seek support among Greeks and Russians, who are imagined as the only allies because of their rootedness in Byzantine civilization. These cultural

links with past colonial masters and "friendly nations" are the main source of differentialist racism, which revives the suppressed discourse of race-as-culture which currently fuels the nationalist revivals in the Balkans. The escape from Yugoslav identity, which Croats, Bosniaks, and Slovenes have accomplished with the help of "friendly nations," has been represented by the media as the end of domination by the "Serbocommunists." This escape has been achieved by playing on the collective fantasies of superiority which Freud called "the narcissism of minor differences."²

Another complication in understanding the relationship between "blood and song" is added by half a century of military-party dictatorship that imposed itself under the title of "communism." After the emergence of Tito and the Communist Party as the leaders of socialist Yugoslavia, Dvorniković's "integralist" theory was seen as unitarian and reactionary. Yugoslavism was no longer defined as a concept based on the "Dinaric race" shared by Bosniaks, Croats, Montenegrins, and Serbs, but as a project which emerged from the common struggle against fascist occupation and the class interest of "workers and peasants" which joined in a "national liberation struggle" during World War II. The troubled history of racism fueled by Hitler's doctrines transformed the 1941 Independent State of Croatia (NDH) into a mass extermination site for Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies as humans of lesser quality. This often neglected aspect of the Nazi holocaust is what determined the identity of the currently disappearing populations which the West has termed "Croatian Serbs" and "Bosnian Serbs." These populations have been "racialized" as victims of Croat Ustashe who implemented their notorious solution of the "Serbian problem" by thirds: one third exterminated, one third converted to Roman Catholicism, one third expelled from the territories of Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. These "borderline Serbs" who survived the holocaust were brought up on communist ideology and hatred of "fascism," a term that originally lumped together Croat Ustashe, German Nazis, and Italian Fascists but later came to include the entire world of "Western imperialism." These two populations contributed more than anyone during Tito's "national liberation struggle" against "foreign occupation and domestic traitors."

After the war, communist propaganda never properly addressed the problem of mutual slaughter, making collective grievances almost impossible to work through openly. Tito's soft totalitarianism imposed the official ideology of "brotherhood and unity" which managed to suppress dissidence and discussion in any direction. That is why Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia saw any move toward the breakup of Yugoslavia as a return

of "fascism" and implemented their own version of genocidal revenge on Bosniak and Croat populations at the beginning of the latest war. The Slovene call from the Alpine heights resounded with frightening clarity in the blood of those whose ancestors were sacrificed on the altar of Hitler's "new European order" (Debeljak 1994).

In contrast to Dvorniković, folk song was often seen by the communist "cultural workers" as a separatist or chauvinist tool that could undermine political unity, since folk song was rooted in the "blood and soil" of local, regional identity. Folk songs were often identified as Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Macedonian, or Slovene and participated in the creation of folkloristic performances which displayed "civilizational" particularities. In order to produce "proletarian culture," the Yugoslav communist establishment often masked differences by sponsoring folk music societies and professional folk singing and dancing ensembles (Čolović 1984, 1994).

Yugoslavs living outside urban centers usually identified with the local folkloric heritage as the essence of their being and belonging, while the state tried to promote the concept of "Yugoslav" folklore through local "cultural-artistic societies." Their performances usually began with the performance of a "Yugoslav" number, which was supposed to accent the official "brotherhood and unity." Each of the constituent nations was represented by a song or a dance which was then choreographed into a medley with musical transitions between them, forming what came to be known as a "plait of folk songs and dances." This musical version of the Communist Party platform was supposed to promote inter-ethnic confidence and understanding by blending the folk songs of various ethnic groups. After the "fall of communism," the musical plait was disentangled along "civilizational" fault lines, producing a new staging of a mix of racial and cultural pride which accompanied mass political rallies of the late 1980s. The rise of turbo folk in Serbia was part of the same political current that countered the Titoist version of multicultural communism in the name of Pan-Serbian self-determination. Thus the tremendous popularity of Lepa Brena came at the same time as the communist system began to fade away under the pressures exerted by the emergent nationalist leadership in Serbia. This Serbian version of a folk Madonna with a Barbie look was the first one to introduce synthesizers and rhythm machines along with the traditional accordions and violins, co-opting musical technology from rock culture to reinforce dynamism and eroticism in her recordings and performances. Lepa Brena could be called the mother of turbo folk, which now dominates the musical scene in Serbia and parts of the eastern Balkans (Dragićević-Šešić 1994).

The appropriation of rock idiom and instrumentation in Serbia was preceded by the rise of the currently best known alternative band from the "other" Europe. Musical articulations of Slovenian cultural supremacy appeared in pseudo-parodic performances of Laibach in the decade preceding the latest Yugoslav war. This post-punk band used a variety of totalitarian images to promote itself. The Yugoslav communist identity was built on the premise of fighting German Nazism, so the insistence of Slovene performers on giving themselves a German name was very controversial. With strong roots in conceptual art, Laibach's musical performances featured overidentification with the political power in the form of military uniforms, calls for abolition of individuality, and submission to the will of the state. Laibach is a German name for Ljubljana. the capital of Slovenia. Thriving on the ambivalent reactions of the cultural and political establishment, Laibach grew into a hierarchically organized art movement which also gave itself a German name: Neue slowenische Kunst.

By invoking Austrian and German colonial presence in Slovenia, the band caused an uncanny feeling among general audiences. Most of the urban youth took it as sarcastic retro-fitting, while some officials protested, threatening bans and legal action. By displaying swastika-like symbols and singing almost exclusively in German, Laibach not only performed Slovene cultural separation from the Balkans and its embrace of *Mitteleuropa*, but also laid bare the trappings of communist totalitarianism. The critical distance that rock culture nurtured in the 1960s and 1970s was replaced by the erasure of distance and parodic identification with the aggressor. This is how Laibach answered the question about the Slovene character of their music:

The creative ability of the artist identifies with the national spirit. Every artist carries within him certain (ethnic) characteristics, which are the result of a common origin and kindred lifestyle of a group of people over a longer historical period. These characteristics are reflected in his work. It is impossible to imagine Cervantes or Leonardo as Russians, Voltaire and Verdi as Germans, Dostoyevski and Wagner as Italians or LAIBACH as Yugoslavs. (New Collectivism 1991: 43–44)

By identifying themselves as protagonists of Slovene and not Yugoslav art, Laibach offered the best articulation of a model of cultural separation in all parts of the country toward the end of the decade. Laibach's call became clear only after Slovenia demanded separation from the "eastern tide of chaos": we are part of white Europe and the West because "our," Slovene, music is much more sophisticated than that of the

other, "primitive" Yugoslavs. Interestingly, Laibach's statement uses the same theories of "national character" invoked by Dvorniković, except that the sense of "our" song is now applicable only to Slovenia, not to all of Yugoslavia.

During the last decade of communist rule in Yugoslavia, belonging to a different cultural and civilizational framework became the central metaphor of a new type of ethnic totalitarianism with tacit racial undertones. Naturalized cultural differences which stood in the way of Dvorniković when he tried to provide an inclusive definition of "our" song as a collective voice of the Yugoslav race reappeared as the communist control over public life gradually weakened after Tito's death. Cultural differentiation in the realm of folk music is based on a claim that Slovene polkas and accordions are part of the Germanic-dominated Central European heritage, while Macedonian songs reflect half a millennium of Ottoman Turkish influences based on zurle and drums. By contrasting Slovene Northwest with Macedonian Southeast, racial differentialists claim that there can be no common life between Europe and Asia, between the West and the East, between the North and the South. Although all of the territory of former Yugoslavia was geographically situated in Europe, the symbolic geography instituted by multiple invasions, occupations, and colonizations structured a differential identity for each member of a particular Yugoslav ethnic group. For example, Bosniaks' horizon of identity could always be extended to include Istanbul as "one's own" site, Croats' to include Rome and Berlin, and Serbs' to include Athens and Moscow. This extension of Slavic racial identity made the possibility of a Yugoslav breakup along "civilizational" fault lines realizable within a framework of this new "differentialist" form of racism.

These particular identities have been internalizing the gaze of West European Romantics who envisioned them as "noble savages" striving toward independence from empires that were slowly ending their presence during the nineteenth century. After the formation of the first Yugoslav state, the attempt was made to imagine a culture based on common Slavic "brotherhood" which tried to "integrally" assimilate non-Slavic races by imagining a cultural vision of Dinaric-based identity of shared historical destiny of subjugated peoples. Dvorniković's work was a crown of that effort published way too late, as is often the case in the Balkans, since Yugoslavia had only two years of life before it was dismembered as part of Hitler's vision of the "new European order" ruled by Nordic races. The North and the West reasserted themselves as superior terms within the racist symbolic geography that continues to

structure Eurocentric conceptions of identity and otherness. Yugo-Slavs remain locked within this classification as Yugo-Slaves, as peoples whose songs and dances entertain and provoke nostalgia for an imaginary originality of being which belongs to the East, while their dreadful bloodsheds awaken the need of the West to simultaneously distance itself culturally while imposing military order on these unruly races of the South.

During the Second World War, "brotherly" blood was shed along "civilizational" lines, proving that Balibar's theory that culture replaces nature functions in ordinary racism as well: Ustashe exterminated hundreds of thousands of Serbs during the Second World War because they were perceived as people of a lower civilizational standard who occupied Croatian Lebensraum. What defined Serbs as racial others was their adherence to Christian Orthodoxy and the use of the Cyrillic script. The common language was replaced by Croatian, books in Cyrillic were burned and Serbs converted to Catholicism (becoming Croats), expelled across the river Drina into Serbia, or exterminated in Jasenovac or elsewhere.

Serbian conquests in the Wars of Yugoslav Succession (1991–95) were culturally coded through the discourse of revenge for all past injustices, including Croat and Bosniak collaboration with the Nazis in the Second World War. The creation of detention camps and mass slaughter of Bosnian and Croat civilians is a repetition of a scenario that Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia implemented as a result of their own "identification with the aggressor." With strength in numbers and weapons provided by years of Tito's buildup to protect his brand of communist "Yugoslavism," the Serbs set out to create a common state structure by occupying "their own" territories in Croatia and Bosnia, after these two Yugoslav republics demanded full independence and excluded Serbs from their vision of the new state. Serbs imagined themselves as the adhesive that made Yugoslavia possible, while assimilating differences into their notion of an "integral" sense of cultural identity. When the end of communism left nothing of Yugoslavia to adhere to, they began to wage war for a common Serbian state and sing about their own superiority as lovers and warriors who fight not only against the brothers who betrayed the dream of a common state, but also against the whole world (Morgan 1995).

War songs foreground Freud's "narcissism of minor differences" with horrifying symptoms of that particular European disease that burdens the Balkan singer. Ever since Yugoslavia began to come apart in the late 1980s and imploded in 1991, folk song underwent a drastic redefinition. An uncanny hybridization of musical forms and traditions has taken place as a result of new music technologies. While accordion and violin remain dominant instruments, musical arrangements now include electric guitars, rhythm machines, and synthesizers. An especially frightening hybrid entitled "Srbi supermeni" (Serbs supermen), which could be characterized as war rap, concludes a recently released CD entitled *Srpske omiljene ratne pesme* (Serbian favorite war songs). After the main theme has been introduced on the accordion, the rap segment with vocals and rhythm machine proclaims in a refrain:

We are Serbs supermen
We wage war against the whole world
we are ready for the holy war
even if it lasts a hundred years. (track 20)

These lines demonstrate how a culture nurtured on stories of racial and historical victimization can easily transform their status of "international pariah" into a position of "superhuman" strength.

This song is the most sobering example of what the unresolved consequences of World War II genocide and present global isolation and Western diplomatic and military intervention have done to the collective identity of the Serbs in Bosnia. Regarded as the main perpetrators of genocide in the Bosnian war, they further embrace xenophobic cultural values and prepare for the "holy war" against the rest of the world. The notion of Islamic *jihad* was assimilated into the culture of colonized Christian "serfs" during half a millennium of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. The postcolonial appropriation of the master's metaphors of domination becomes most obvious in war songs, as race and gender are performed as signs of one's own superiority.

A subculture of ethnic war songs sprouted overnight, especially among the more extreme wings of the Serbian and Croatian paramilitary groups. The musical content was often very similar, with the texts offering diametrically opposed visions of the war. The format for the dissemination of war songs was the home-made audio cassette, which was easy to record and distribute through vendors on city streets. Alongside the new arrangements of the Serbian Chetnik and Croatian Ustashe songs that were banned in socialist Yugoslavia, this genre contained a lot of newly composed war songs as well. One of the pearls of Croatian home recording production is UNPROFOR Big Band, whose cassette title invokes the vagina of someone's mother, the most common curse

in Serbo-Croatian: "Svima njima pizda materina." The illustration on the cassette cover shows a monkey with a blue United Nations helmet holding an automatic rifle, which is an obvious commentary on the number of black soldiers in the United Nations Protection Force in the Serb-held territories of Croatia. It is symptomatic that the Croatian authorities have even demanded that all UN soldiers from African countries be removed from Croatia, because of their "incompatible cultural values."

The problematic masculinity, tied to ethnic identity, is revealed in these songs with frightening clarity. The songs of UNPROFOR Big Band are saturated with obscenities, whose gender component reveals some of the cultural mechanisms that have been deeply suppressed before the war. The song "Oj, Šešelju, pederska guzico" (Hey, Šešelj, you faggot asshole), devoted to the leader of the extreme right-wing Serbian Radical Party, brings into the dialectic of war the play of the active-passive partners in homosexual intercourse.

Hey Šešelj, hey Šešelj concerning Karlobag [a city in Croatia] you can get, you can get a prick up your ass. (Luković 1992: 31)

The passivization and feminization of the political opponent, who is then defiled through rape, serves to enhance and strengthen the Croatian sense of masculinity and racial superiority. The symbolic rape of Vojislav Šešelj, whose aim was to incorporate the Serbian ethnic territories in Croatia and Bosnia, is a message of what is awaiting Serbs who do not submit to Croat rule. The deeper cultural layer of homophobia reveals the affinity between the ethnic rivals; Croatian and Serbian right-wingers actually share the same set of values, which makes them lust for the racial Other of the same sex. This repression of homoeroticism leads to the literal killing of those whom they really lust for, since the "civilizational" prohibitions will not allow such a coupling within the extremely patriarchal Balkan environment. Another song from this cassette, devoted to the leaders of the Bosnian Serbs, "Karadžiću, majmune sa grane" (Karadžić, monkey on a branch), has a stanza that confirms this repressed homoerotic fascination with the racial "Other":

My prick is piercing the long-johns hey Mladić, give me a blow job the flak jacket may save you but certainly not from the back. (ibid. 30)

This time, General Ratko Mladić, the military commander of the Bosnian Serbs, is invited to perform sexual acts that are perceived as demeaning to his manhood and heroism.

While the Ustashe seem keen on demonstrating their masculine power to the Serbs, the Chetnik songs are usually saturated with a sense of resentment that gives rise to the historical alibis for their "ethnic cleansing" operations. A song entitled "Znaš, Srbine, kad smo bili mali" (Remember, Serb, when we were little) goes back to the First World War to find roots of Serbian suffering:

You know, Serb, when we were little in 1914 when we were whispering we could not get together in groups of two or three but had to say that we were all Croats. (ibid. 31)

The song describes the situation in Bosnia during the Austrian occupation, when Serbs could not freely exhibit their national identity but had to pretend that they were Croats in order not to be killed or sent to prison. The singer, Veselin Grujić Vesa, insists on "Orthodox religion and the Cyrillic script" as the signs of national difference from the Croats. Another singer, Baja Mali Knindža, sings that

ever since God created humans always others come to judge us always someone bothers the Serbs that's why in Bosnia there's no peace. (ibid. 30)

Most of the new "war songs" created by the Serbs have a tendency to assign the blame for the Yugoslav conflict to someone else, who is usually outside the Balkans.

The central metaphor that informs the process of political and cultural "postmodernization" after Yugoslavia is a return to the neomedieval conceptions of one's own identity. In Serbia proper, the new political elites who desired separation did everything to promote a return of identity based on patriotism, Orthodox Christianity, and national pride. At the same time, "new folk" music was intentionally given more air time on the radio and television at the expense of domestic and foreign rock music. The triumph of nationalism caused not only a return to religious fundamentalism, racist stereotyping, and intolerance, but also a cultural domination of a new folk music which appropriated elements of rock and hip-hop idioms to broaden its appeal to Serbian urban audiences. This process resulted in the appearance of turbo folk, a musical genre which prevails in Serbia today.

The most conspicuous fact about turbo folk is the ease with which it absorbs and blends cultural elements which appear to be mutually exclusive. The singing is almost entirely in the tradition of the "new folk" that has been present in the Yugoslav popular culture since the 1960s. The rhythm is borrowed from techno and hip-hop, its abundant use of machines and synthesizers derived from the global influence of African-American rhythm. This is blended with the accompaniment of instruments typically used in traditional folk songs, dominated by the accordion and violin. The preferred medium for the dissemination of turbo folk is a music video, with an entire television channel (Palma) devoted to the songs of turbo folk stars. Consequently, the image of the performers becomes much more important than it used to be in the "new folk" music before the 1990s. As a rule, the turbo folk singer is female, with looks that fit into the race and gender demands of Western musical performers: short skirts, screaming makeup, heavy golden chains, rings, and bracelets, with the local addition of the obligatory Orthodox cross around her neck. To contrast this surface image of whiteness, the singing is distinctly "oriental," with an abundance of vibrato punctuated by eroticized dancing in the combination of "folk" and "techno" styles.

Most of the music videos display longing for European economic "whiteness" by grotesque emulations of the "lifestyles of the rich and famous" in the country which lived through an undeclared war and a global economic embargo. The dress of the performers is conspicuously "Western," modeled on images borrowed from foreign television commercials. Music spots feature women taking bubble baths, posing in front of the latest models of Porsches or BMWs, or revealing sexy black lace underwear. By creating a tele-musical fantasy structure about Serbs as "heavenly people" who remain beautiful and vital despite all the hard-ships imposed from the outside, turbo folk enables the Serbs to feel they are participating in the "Western" construction of whiteness and Europe at the same time as they are economically, politically and culturally excluded from it (Tompson 1995).

One of the stranger characteristics of these new songs is the fact that they ignore the "original" Serbian folk songs by openly displaying the "oriental" musical heritage rooted in Ottoman colonial presence on the Balkan peninsula. Most of the singers use a particular technique of nasal singing, which provides their songs with a specific "oriental" color. Most of the initial mega-stars of the "new folk" music were in fact Muslims—the "two Halids" as they were called in the 1980s, Halid Bešlić and Halid Muslimović. The female superstar from this initial period, Lepa Brena, was also a Muslim by heritage; her real name is Fahreta Jahić. The

"oriental" character of the songs and their performers is paradoxical, since the Serbs have regarded Turks and Muslims in general as their national "other" ever since their own post-colonial sense of tragedy after the loss at Kosovo.³

Half a millennium later, Serbian popular favorites sounded as if they were produced in the heart of an "oriental" empire. During the past five years, the Serbs have historically and culturally been identified with the role Europe had reserved for the Ottomans during the nineteenth century. They represent the "sick man of Europe," whose slavery to the Turks had transformed them into a collectivity of living dead who sing about love and pain in the voice of their former colonial masters. The song represents a connection to "heavenly Serbia," a realm attained by the collective spilling of blood on the Kosovo field in 1389 which is historically invested with the anger of those whose desires had been frustrated by betrayal by both their women and their ethnic Others. Only a couple of years after the introduction of the "oriental" sound in the form of turbo folk, the tide of nationalist euphoria pushed the Serbs into "ethnic cleansing" operations against Muslims in Bosnia, making the popularity of the "two Halids" even more ironic. How could the eruption of "orientalism" in folk music coincide with the extermination of those whose ancestors converted to Islam centuries ago (Vgrešić 1994)?

Turbo folk is the sound of an unacknowledged postcolonial culture that had been dormant under the communist veil of forgetfulness until the latest war. The techno rhythms are embraced from the colonial cultures to the North and the West (Europe proper) as markers of racial/cultural superiority, while the wailing voice of the singer articulates a suppressed, shameful legacy of one's slavery to the Turks who are regarded as a part of the inferior cultures and races of the East and South. At the same time, this music reveals the emptiness of myths of racial and ethnic authenticity, since turbo folk almost features a hybrid culture produced by the combination of musical importations from the past and present colonial masters. Turbo folk fit perfectly into the emergent nationalist culture of the late 1980s and the war culture of the early 1990s, since it foregrounded a zero-degree identity of technological dynamism and emotional depth, which could easily be blended with the political rhetoric about age-old Serbian pride and desire for independence.

This new identity is defined by the desire for inclusion into the symbolic realm of European "whiteness" which is manifested in the presence of the adjective "turbo" in the name of the musical genre. The incessant

repetition of the techno beat is a ritual meant to insure their belonging to the West, which has never recognized them as its own part. The place of the Serbs within the West is defined by the Latin etymology of their proper name (servus, Lat. "servant, serf, slave"). This abject position makes them "black" despite their genetic "whiteness" in the eyes of the West. In order to entice the gaze of the West, new Serbian singers engage in musical performances rooted in the combination of the most archaic and the most modern. On the one hand, Serbian treatment of the Ottoman colonial heritage comes from the Christian crusading mythology which manifests European fear of contamination with an alien, "oriental" civilization. At the same time, turbo folk features the "oriental" sound as the essence of racial being and belonging, which it appropriates from the culture of Ottoman invaders as a metaphor of its own colonial power over other Yugoslav ethnic groups. Dvorniković's vision of the Yugoslav race voiced by the wailing song of Dinaric highlanders has been "balkanized" by the particular voices of new "cultural racism" which predominates after the latest Yugoslav war. As Croats sing "Danke Deutchland" (Thank you, Germany) to the sponsors of their secession from Yugoslavia and Serbs glorify the "ethnic cleansing" of Muslims with songs like "Miloš tera stoku preko Save" (Miloš drives the cattle across the Sava River), (SORP, track 4), the uncanny presence of hatred of other "Yugoslavs" and megalomaniac glorification of one's own newly invented "people" bears witness to the direction that European conceptions of folk music and race will take in the next millennium.

NOTES

- 1. Most of Dvorniković's critique of the superiority of Nordic "racial style" comes from reading Ludvig F. Clauss, Rasse und Seele: Eine Einführung in den Sinn der leiblichen Gestalt (Munich, 1934), and Die nordische Seele: Eine Einführung in die Rassenseelenkunde (Munich, 1936).
- 2. "Serbo-communist" is term used by the Croatian state media in responding to "aggression" by the local Serb population, which was forced into the embrace of their brethren east of the river Drina. Freud's famous definition of nationalism fits well into the Yugoslav picture since the differences are truly minor in comparison to other postcolonial moments (*Civilisation and Its Discontents* [London: Hogarth, 1961], 114).
- 3. The Serbian vision of national identity is rooted in the discourse of revenge for the loss of independence after the battle of Kosovo in 1389. The target of revenge is Turks and local converts to Islam in Bosnia, Sandžak, Montenegro, and Kosovo itself.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Balibar, Etienne, and Immanuel Wallerstein. 1991. Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities. London: Verso.

Čolović, Ivan. Divlja književnost: etnolingvističko proučavanje paraliterature [Wild literature: Ethnolinguistic study of paraliterature]. Belgrade: Nolit.

- 1994. Pucanje od zdravlja Belgrade: Beogradski krug.

Debeljak, Aleš. 1994. Twilight of the Idols: Recollections of a Lost Yugoslavia. Fredonia: White Pine Press.

Dragićević-Šešić, Milena. 1994. Neofolk kultura: publika i njene zvezde [Neofolk culture: The audience and its stars]. Sremski Karlovci: Zoran Stojanović.

Dvorniković, Vladimir. 1939. Karakterologija Jugoslovena. [The characterology of the Yugoslavs]. Belgrade: Geca Kon.

Hayden, Robert, and Milica Bakić-Hayden. 1992. "Orientalist Variations on 'The Balkans.'" Slavic Review 13: 1–15.

Luković, Petar. 1992. "Šta pevaju Srbi i Hrvati?" [What Do Serbs & Croats Sing?]. Vreme (30 Nov): 29–32.

Morgan, Peter. 1995. "War Music." Planet 114: 32-38.

New Collectivism, ed. 1991. Neue slowenische Kunst. Los Angeles: AMOK Books.

Ramet, Pedro. 1985. "Apocalypse Culture and Social Change in Yugoslavia." In Yugoslavia in the 1980's, ed. Pedro Ramet. Boulder, Colo.: Westview.

Tompson, Mark. 1995. Proizvodnja rata: mediji u Srbiji, Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini. Belgrade: Radio B92.

Trifunović, Brano. 1993. Omiljene srpske ratne pesme [Favorite Serbian war songs], vol. 1, CD-9308.

Ugrešić, Dubravka. 1994. "Folksies." Erewhon 1: 121-43.

UNPROFOR Big Band. 1991. Svima njima pizda materina [May they all go back to their mothers' cunts]: Special Song from Slavonia. Audiocassette. Home production.

Žižek, Slavoj. 1994. The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality. London: Verso.